RESEARCH PLAN PROPOSAL

MARITAL VIRTUES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO INDIVIDUAL FUNCTIONING, COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP ADJUSTMENT

For registration to the degree of

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INTRODUCTION

The marital virtues framework indicates that having and enacting certain personal states of character, or virtues, within the context of a marriage, will strengthen that marriage. Marital virtues may help explain not just how couples need to communicate, but more importantly it may help to identify important constructs between partners that support positive interactions.

Applied to the couple context, the concept of marital virtues is related to recent work in positive psychology, which seeks to shift the focus from pathology of the negative to include character strengths and building the positive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The virtues framework put forth by Fowers (1998, 2000, and 2001) and operationalized by Hawkins, Blanchard, Fawcett, and Jenkins (2007) is based on relatively recent interpretations of Aristotle's ideas of virtue.

Couples in a good marriage do experience happiness, but it's a feeling that grows in their way of being together, it's not just what brings them together. A good marriage has four qualities or virtues: friendship, generosity, fairness, and loyalty. We can develop these qualities within ourselves by focusing on what is most important: creating a good life together with the person we love.

Leading marriage scholar Blaine J. Fowers explains what years of counseling and research have taught him about marital success: "The best way to have a good marriage is to be a good person."

In particular, Fowers suggests four "marital virtues".

1) Friendship, which is embodied in the characteristics of caring, helpfulness, and companionship.
2) Generosity is shown when spouses forgive each other and see the best in each another.
3) Fairness- The third essential virtue is fairness, which is fostered when spouses are equal partners and share the work of marriage and family life together.

4) Loyalty- Fowers said that someone preparing for marriage should develop loyalty i.e. a commitment to one's relationship in spite of difficulties that will inevitably arise in marriage.

As individuals focus on developing the virtues of a good spouse, they begin to view marriage as more than just a means to personal happiness; rather, they see it as a partnership that invites them to live outside themselves for the good of their future spouse and others.

Most married couples admit that maintaining their marriage requires work, patience, personal growth, compromise, commitment, and sacrifice.

VARIABLES OF THE STUDY:

a) Marital virtues:

The marital virtues framework indicates that having and enacting certain personal states of character, or virtues, within the context of a marriage, which will strengthen that marriage. Marital virtues may help explain not just how couples need to communicate, but more importantly it may help to identify important constructs between partners that support positive interactions.

b) Individual Functioning:

Fowler (2009) defines individual functioning as "the role of the individual in the community".

c) Communication:

Communication is defined as the two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange (encode-decode) information but also create and share meaning. It refers to transfer of information from one person to another and the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver through an appropriate medium.

d) Relationship adjustment:

Relationship or marital adjustment is the concept of two people adjusting to married life, both socially and financially. Well-adjusted marriages are expected to last for a long time, while poorly adjusted ones end in divorce.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

RESEARCH STUDIES ON INDIVIDUAL FUNCTIONING IN RELATION TO MARITAL VIRTUES

- Jacob, Theodore. & Leonard, Kenneth in 1992 examined the sequential analysis of marital interactions involving alcoholic, depressed, and nondistressed men in 131 couples. Videotaped observations, Marital Interaction Coding System were used. Results indicated that depressed couples were most distinguishable in terms of unique antecedent-consequent patterns, whereas alcoholic and nondistressed control couples were similar to one another and different from depressed couples.

- Whisman MA, Uebelacker LA & Weinstock LM. in 2004 conducted a research to study psychopathology and marital satisfaction in 774 married couples. It was found by using path analysis, hierarchical linear modeling and Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2) content scales that marital satisfaction was predicted by the person's own level of anxiety and depression (i.e., actor effects) and by his or her spouse's level of depression only (i.e., partner effects). Findings also indicated that (a) there were no significant gender differences in the magnitude of effects, (b) depression effects were significantly stronger than anxiety effects, (c) actor effects were significantly stronger than partner effects, and (d) there were interactions between actor and partner effects for depression only.

RESEARCH STUDIES ON COMMUNICATION IN RELATION TO MARITAL VIRTUES

- A study was conducted by Burleson & Wayne H. Denton in 1997 to examine the relationship between communication skills and marital satisfaction. Participants (30

distressed couples and 30 nondistressed couples) completed tasks providing assessments of four communication skills and two aspects of marital satisfaction. The results indicated that skills and satisfaction were positively associated among nondistressed couples, but were negatively associated among distressed couples.

- Papp et al. in 2009 conducted a study to examine the Demand-withdraw communication into marital conflict in the home in 116 U.S. couples using Hierarchical linear modeling. Results indicated that Husband demand-wife withdraw and wife demand-husband withdraw occurred in the home at equal frequency. It was also found that both demand-withdraw patterns predicted negative emotions and tactics during marital interactions and lower levels of conflict resolution.

RESEARCH STUDIES ON MARITAL ADJUSTMENT IN RELATION TO MARITAL VIRTUES

- Fincham and Bradbury in1993 conducted a study and found out that those who scored low on marital adjustment were more likely to attribute the causes of relationship problems to their partner and that those causes were global and stable. The opposite was true for those who scored high on marital adjustment; they were more likely to view relationship problems as situational and changeable.

- A study was done by Snyder and Schneider in 2002 and the results indicated that one of the main differences between healthy versus dysfunctional relationships is the degree to which partners are both self-aware and aware of their partner.

- Neff & Karney in 2005 reported that awareness i.e. accurate perception of specific partner traits was associated with support and relationship stability.

- A study was done by Stevens in 2005.He used grounded theory to explain the effect of virtues on marital intimacy and found that the presence of marital virtues can increase intimacy in a relationship.

METHODOLOGY

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

Over the past several decades, a considerable body of research has linked relationship adjustment with individual functioning (e.g., Halford, Bouma, Kelly, & Young, 1999; Whisman, Uebelacker, & Weinstock, 2004) and communication (e.g., Burleson & Denton, 1997; Caughlin, 2002).

Within the past decade, some scholars have suggested that relationship adjustment may be also linked to marital virtues, such as othercenteredness, and that this linkage may underpin findings and help illustrate processes related to these linkages (Carroll, Badger, & Yang, 2006; Fowers, 1998, 2000; Hawkins, Fowers, Carroll & Yang, 2007).

Theorizing about the processes by which spouses co-create healthy relationships, Fowers (2001) described the need to move beyond a merely technical concept of a functional marriage and, argued that the successful use of communication skills may be largely dependent upon virtues; that is, personal qualities or character strengths.

An examination of interrelationships between individual functioning, communication and marital virtues, and their linkages to relationship adjustment, may give process-related clues to help explain other extant findings.

A study on marital virtues may provide a broadened knowledge of relationship adjustment and the factors that contribute to having positive relationship adjustment.

This can help professionals in the field create more effective interventions for couples experiencing marital distress, and more effective marriage and relationship education programs.

Researchers have found effective communication to be an important predictor of relationship adjustment. A study of marital virtues may help explain not just how couples need to

communicate, but perhaps more importantly, such a study may help identify important constructs between partners that underpin positive interactions.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

These findings have implications for couple therapy as well as for marriage and relationship education.

Communication issues have played a prominent role in the past theoretical and empirical work on relationship adjustment. However, these findings point toward additional facets of intervention, and imply that skill-based or technical approaches, while important, may likely have limitations. Interventions that also give attention to an individual's well-being would likely have a positive impact on both the enactment of marital virtues as well as on relationship satisfaction. Most importantly, the facilitation of marital virtues – either via education or therapy – may have a positive impact on both communication and both directly and indirectly upon relationship satisfaction.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

- To test whether marital virtues, individual functioning and communication predict relationship adjustment directly.
- To test the potential indirect pathways between individual adjustment, couple communication and marital virtues.

HYPOTHESES:

- Hypothesis I(A): It is hypothesized that individual well being, couple communication and marital virtues will directly predict relationship adjustment
- Hypothesis II(A): It is hypothesized that marital virtues and communication will mediate the relationship between individual well being and relationship adjustment
- Hypothesis II(B): It is hypothesized that communication will mediate the relationship between marital virtues and relationship adjustment

SAMPLE OF THE STUDY:

The sample will consist of 200 married individuals (100 men and 100 women) according to the criteria of inclusion and exclusion of the study.

Criteria of Inclusion:

1. Individuals who are married for at least 3 year.
2. Individuals who have at least a bachelor's degree.
3. Individuals who are above the age of 25 and below the age of 45.
4. Individuals who belong to upper middle class.
5. Individuals who have at least one child.
6. Individuals who come from nuclear families.

Criteria of Exclusion:

1. Individuals who are divorced, widowed or are in live-in-relationships.
2. Individuals who are from joint families.
3. Individuals without any children.
4. Individuals suffering from psychological or physical ailments.

Sample will be selected using purposive sampling technique.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY:

The design of the study will be correlational design.

PROCEDURE:

A sample of 200 individuals will be selected based on criteria of inclusion and exclusion of the study through purposive sampling technique. In the next phase of the study the subjects will be administered the measures of the study.

MEASURES OF THE STUDY:

1. Outcome Questionnaire-10(Lambert et al.,1997)
2. Communication Danger Signs Scale(Kline et al.,2004)
3. Marital Virtues Profile(Fowers et al.,2007)
4. RDAS (Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale) (Busby et al.,1995)

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS:

1. Mean
2. Standard deviation
3. Bivariate Correlation
4. Regression Analysis

Any other higher statistics suitable for the analysis of the data obtained

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

1. The generalizability of the study is likely to be limited by the nature of the data.
2. Because of the correlational design of the study cause and effect relationship cannot be studied.
3. All psychometric measure will be used without any supplemance from projective measures.

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